

Community Transportation of School-Age Youth

Some vehicle share partnerships include organizations that transport youth and students. This FAQ addresses the special procedures that an organization must follow in order to legally transport students. The information in this resource is derived from the Registry of Motor Vehicle (RMV)'s *Guide to School Pupil Transport Vehicles*. For more information, download this manual at www.mass.gov/rmv/7dmanual/.

What are 7D vehicles?

Massachusetts General Laws regulate certain types of transportation of youth. Section 7D of Chapter 90 of the General Laws – called “7D” colloquially – regulates “school pupils” who are transported in vehicles other than school buses on “fixed routes” for the “pupil’s school year.” These vehicles are usually vans and station wagons and are restricted to carry no more than 8 passengers. The vehicles must be registered and must meet 7D standards. (Refer to: M.G.L.c.90. Sec.7D.)

Who is a school pupil?

MA law defines a “school pupil” as any person enrolled in any school, kindergarten through grade twelve, or enrolled for daycare services, or in any program for children with special needs as defined in M.G.L. c.71, Sec.1, or in any organized day or summer camp program or any activity supported by the school.

What is “fixed-route” transportation?

Transporting of school pupils on a predetermined daily basis to and from a set location for the length of the pupil’s school year or the period of time the program is expected to last. This includes transportation from

- Home to school and school to home
- School to school
- Home to school to after-school activity
- Picking up and dropping off at established bus stops
- To an after-school daycare

What is a pupil’s school year?

Transportation must be provided on a regular basis for the pupil’s school year. The length of the pupil’s semester or summer school program may constitute the pupil’s school year. For example, the pupil’s school year is six weeks long if the summer camp lasts for six weeks.

Who can drive a 7D vehicle?

While transporting school pupils, a 7D vehicle must be driven by a qualified driver who holds a 7D certificate. An applicant for a 7D certificate must be at least twenty-one years of age, have had a driver's license for three continuous years immediately prior to application, pass a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check and a Sex Offender Registry Information (SORI) check, have a satisfactory driving record, be of good moral character, and pass an eye exam, a physical exam, and a written knowledge test. The operator's license must be active at all times while operating a 7D vehicle.

How can I apply for a 7D certificate?

To drive a 7D vehicle, you must have a 7D certificate. To apply for a 7D certificate, download an application at www.mass.gov/rmv/forms/21038.pdf. To complete the application, you will have to get a physical and eye exam from a licensed physician. Bring your completed application form to an RMV office and pay the application fee to complete the process. Once you have a 7D certificate, you are responsible for renewing it in a timely manner. Certificates must be renewed annually.

How do I register and renew a 7D vehicle?

All vehicles used for 7D transportation must display a PUPIL registration number plate. To apply for this registration, download a copy of registration application from the RMV website at www.mass.gov/rmv or call 857-368-8000. Registration steps and procedures differ depending on whether your company has or does not have currently registered 7D vehicles. If you do not have any vehicles registered, an RMV inspector will visit your organization to assess whether your vehicle and driver policies are in compliance with 7D. 7D registrations are valid for two years from the date of issue. When your 7D vehicle renewal approaches, the RMV may notify you by sending you an RMV-2 renewal application.

What are safety inspection requirements for 7D vehicles?

In addition to the annual state inspection, 7D vehicles are required to have a semi-annual safety inspection in accordance with M.G.L. c.90. s.7D. These additional inspections take place in February and March and again in October and November. Not all state inspection facilities conduct 7D inspections. To see a list of approved inspection facilities, visit www.mass.gov/rmv and search under Inspection. In addition, a detailed *Guide to 7D Vehicle Inspection* can be downloaded from the same website. Chapter 4 contains a list of basic vehicle components and required equipment that will be inspected. See www.mass.gov/rmv/7dmanual.

Can school bus drivers operate a 7D vehicle?

Yes. Any person licensed to operate a school bus by the MA Department of Public Utilities (DPU) may operate a 7D vehicle.

Can a holder of a commercial driver's license with a passenger endorsement operate a 7D vehicle?

No. Holding such license is not sufficient to allow you to drive a 7D vehicle. You must either hold a school bus certificate or obtain a 7D certificate.

Do you need a 7D certificate if you are not driving pupils?

No. A 7D certificate is not required if there are no pupils in the vehicle and the school bus sign is in the down position.

This resource is not legal advice. For detailed information on 7D vehicles, please download "Guide to School Pupil Transport Vehicles" at www.mass.gov/rmv/7dmanual/.

This project was funded by a Federal Transit Administration grant to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services' Human Service Transportation Office.

Reference: Aniko Laszlo. (2012) *Community Transportation of School-Age Youth*, University of Massachusetts Medical School, Center for Health Policy and Research, Shrewsbury, MA.

For additional resources, briefs, and information related to community transportation in Massachusetts, please visit www.mass.gov/hst.

